



**NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC  
ALLIANCE**

**BEVER LIVE**

**PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANITY IN ARMENIA.  
DISCUSSION IN WASHINGTON**



# The AAHC and its Exclusive Mission

**Dr. Peter Flew**

**International Lawyer and Historian**



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# The Unique Position of the AAHC

- **Christianization of Armenia: 301 and Gregory the Illuminator**
- **The written word and Armenia's unique literary culture**
- **1700 years of service – unmatched by any secular institution**
- **Apostolic foundations: St Bartholomew and St Thaddeus**
- **Apostolic Character: direct and autocephalous**



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# Constitutional Mandate

- **Karekin I, the Catholicos of All Armenians from 1994 to 1999:**

**The current leaders of our country, knowing how the Soviet state sought to manipulate the Church, are trying not to repeat these mistakes, since the merger of the Church and the state does not serve the interests of either side. The Armenian state was formed as a secular state. However, cooperation between the Church and the state is necessary. The Church must be included in the national life of the country.**

- **Article 18.1: The Republic of Armenia shall recognise the exclusive mission of the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church, as a national church, in the spiritual life of the Armenian people, in the development of their national culture and preservation of their national identity.**



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# Persecution of the AAHC

- **May 2025 World Council of Churches in Bern**
- **Catholicos Karekin II:**

**The impunity of such barbaric crimes fosters a climate of lawlessness—not only enabling Azerbaijan to continue its acts of cultural vandalism but also encouraging similar or even more heinous crimes to take place elsewhere in the world. Therefore, the protection of cultural values is not only a sacred duty, but an imperative for preserving the history, faith, and identity of all peoples and nations.**

- **Facebook attacks**
- **Co-ordinating Council**
- **Arrest and detention of bishops, clergy and parishioners**
- **Arrests of Samvel Karapetyan**



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# Samvel Karapetyan

## Article 422 of the Criminal Code (public calls to seize power)

**What opinion should I have when a small group, forgetting Armenian history and the thousands of years of the Armenian Church's history, has attacked the Armenian Church and the Armenian people? Since I have always stood by the Armenian Church and the Armenian people, I will become directly involved. If the politicians fail, then we will participate in our own way in all of this.**



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# Continued Persecution

- **Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan: the Church “has no Catholicos”.**
- **Seeks “the spiritual and moral renewal of the Armenian Apostolic Church” (November 6)**
- **Renovationism?**



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# Armenia's Actions Against the Armenian Apostolic Church Violate Its Own Constitution and Laws

Lauren B. Homer, Esq.

President, Law and Liberty Trust



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# The Problem: Plan to Take Over Church Governance

**My remarks aim to support the rule of law in Armenia's dealings with the worldwide Armenian Apostolic Church, PM Pashinyan demands the resignation of the Catholicos on moral grounds and declares his right to set up a committee to decide who the next Catholicos shall be. He ordered arrests for hierarchs joining with his political opponents in demanding the PM resign. He abolished the AAHC's right to teach religious curriculum in public schools.**

**He should get back in his lane. The AAHC has the right to self-governance, autonomy, and non interference. It belongs to the world and its members, not to the Armenian PM**



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# Armenia's Constitution--Religious Freedom and Separation of Church and State

## **Article 17. The State and Religious Organizations**

- 1. The freedom of activity of religious organizations shall be guaranteed in the Republic of Armenia.**
- 2. Religious organizations shall be separate from the state.**

## **Article 18. The Armenian Apostolic Holy Church**

- 1. The Republic of Armenia shall recognize the exceptional mission of the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church, as the national church, in the spiritual life of the Armenian people, in the development of its national culture, and in the preservation of its national identity.**
- 2. The relationship between the Republic of Armenia and the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church may be regulated by a law.**



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# Constitution: Right to Autonomy, Freedom of Expression; Freedom of Assembly

## Article 41. The Freedom of Thought, Conscience, and Religion

4. Religious organizations shall have equal rights and shall enjoy autonomy. The procedure of creation and operation of religious organizations shall be stipulated by law.

## Article 42. The Freedom of Expression of Opinion

1. Everyone shall have the right to freely express his opinion..

## Article 44. The Freedom of Assembly

1. Everyone shall have the right to freely organize and participate in peaceful and unarmed assemblies.

Limits on the above : “may be restricted only by law with the aim of protecting state security, preventing crimes, protecting the public order, health and morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.



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# The Law of the Republic of Armenia on the Freedom of Conscience and on Religious Organizations

**Preamble: Being cognizant of the Armenian Apostolic Church as the national Church of the Armenian people and as an important bulwark for the edification of its spiritual life and national preservation.**

**Section 6: In the Republic of Armenia the following Religious Organizations operate: the Armenian Apostolic Church ("Armenian Church") with her traditional organizations; other religious organizations which are established and function within the circle of their respective faithful in accordance with private ownership and bylaws.**



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# Non-Interference in Internal Affairs

**Section 17: In the Republic of Armenia, Church and State are separate. On the basis of this separation the State: . . . .**

**b) Shall not interfere in the activities and internal affairs of church and Religious Organizations as long as they operate in accordance with the law.**

**c) . . . . The State shall not obstruct the efforts of the Armenian Church in pursuing the following activities which we expressly reserved to be her privilege solely: To contribute to the spiritual edification of the Armenian people and to carry out the same in the state educational institutions within the law.**



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# Right to Participate; Special Law

**Section 18: The State guarantees the right of the members or employees of Religious Organizations to take part in the civil and political life on an equal basis with other citizens.**

**2007 LAW ON THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA AND THE HOLY ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH**

**Article 2.2: 2. The Republic of Armenia recognizes the self-governance of the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church within the limits of its hierarchy.**



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# AAHC is Multi-National, Ancient

**Armenia population: 3 million (98% AAHC); AAHC international membership 9 million: Europe, Middle East, North and South America**

**The Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin is the pre-eminent center of authority in the worldwide Armenian Apostolic Church; Karekin II is the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos, the spiritual leader of the worldwide church and its representative.**

**The National Ecclesiastical Assembly (hereby NEA) is the supreme governing body of the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church; elects the Catholicos; determines qualifications of members.**



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# The Artsakh Wars : a desire to destroy Christian Armenia. Internal and external enemies

**Corentin Clerc**

**Former NGO Director in Armenia**

**SOS Chrétiens d'Orient**



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# The religious dimension of the Artsakh / Karabagh War...

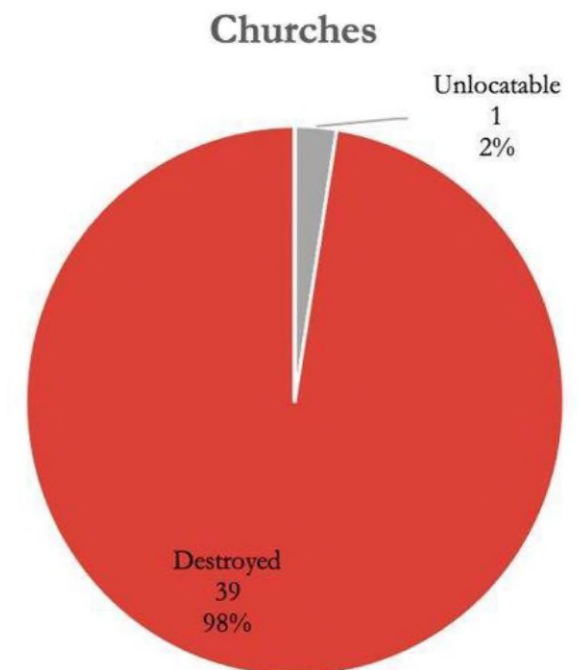
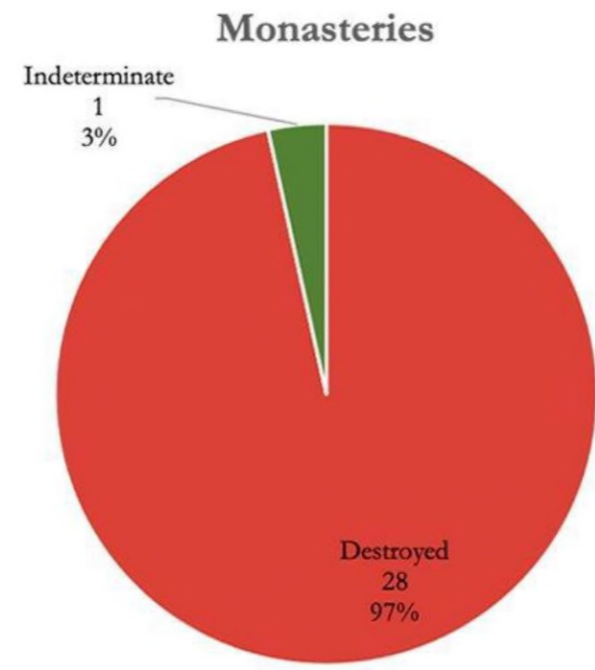
- **Almost all religious monuments have been vandalized.**
  - **1% remain intact (undestroyed, unaltered)**
  - **Reducing gravestones to rubble to build the highway of victory**
- **Writing a new history**
  - **Inventing an Albanian Church to justify the existence of Christian monuments in conquered territories**
  - **The conversion of churches into mosques**
  - **Reciting Muslim prayers in Armenian churches**



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# The religious dimension of the Artsakh / Karabagh War

Caucasus Heritage Watch  
SH.053-0 St. Hovhannes Mkrtych Church (Kanach Zham), Shusha/Shushi



the proportion of monasteries destroyed in Nakhichevan



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The example of Sourp Hovannes Church

# The religious dimension of the Artsakh / Karabagh War



Culture Of Azerbaijan @Cultur... · 1 h

🇦🇷 📍 Khudavang Monastery Complex

Khudavang, or Dedevang, Monastery Complex is located in the Vang village of Kalbajar District, on the left bank of Tartar River. It is one of the largest and most beautiful examples of Azerbaijan's Christian architecture.



💬 3 🔄 9 ❤️ 53 📊 1 231 🔗



**Chouchi cathedral converted into mosque**

***The appropriation of the Armenian monastery of Dadivank***



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# **...not addressed by the Armenian Government**

**No condemnation of attacks on cultural property**

**Acceptance of all the humiliating conditions of peace**

- **The forgetting of the Armenian genocide**
- **The arrival of thousands of Azerbaijani citizens in Armenia**
- **In addition to the loss of historic lands, the payment of heavy compensation**

**The muzzling of the Church of Artsakh and the blocking of its social works**



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# Not addressed by the Armenian Government



*A citizenship card for “Western Azerbaijan” issued by the government in Baku*

*The conditions imposed by the former executioner are accepted by the new government.*



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# After the war : The advent of a new Armenia, secular and anti-Christian

**The imprisonment of priests and prelates**

**The promotion of anti-Christian values by the government**

- **Gender ideology,**
- **Challenging traditional family structures**
- **Refusal to mobilize the nation for its defense, by considering the end of military service and allowing the enemy to occupy entire swathes of territory**
- **Removing all religious references from public places**



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# Let us preserve Christian Armenia



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# Briefing on visit to Yerevan

**Joel Veldkamp**  
**Director for Public Advocacy**  
**Christian Solidarity International**



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# CSI's work for the people of Artsakh



## Advocating for the Swiss Peace Initiative for Nagorno Karabakh at the United Nations – September 2025



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# Growing repression in Armenia



**A screenshot from a video of the 13 November detention of podcaster Vazgen Saghatelyan, one of three journalists detained by Armenia's internal security services during CSI's visit.**



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# Growing repression in Armenia

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MINISTRY OF JUSTICE  
REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

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МИНИСТЕРСТВО ЮСТИЦИИ  
РЕСПУБЛИКИ АРМЕНИЯ

0010 Երևան, Վազգեն Սարգսյան 3/8  
3/8 Yuzgen Sargsyan str. Yerevan 0010  
0010 Ереван, ул. Вазгена Саргсяна 3/8

№/14.3.1/51768-2025

13 November 2025

PRESIDENT OF THE CHRISTIAN SOLIDARITY INTERNATIONAL

MR. JOHN EIBNER

Dear Mr Eibner,

Thank you for your letter dated November 10, 2025.

The Ministry of Justice is ready to cooperate with your organization on issues within its mandate.

However, we would like to inform you that matters regarding the approval of visits with detainees fall outside the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice and are regulated by the procedures outlined below.



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# Growing repression in Armenia

## A member of the ruling party calls for the seizure of the Union of Journalists building in Yerevan.



Ժուռնալիստների միության գույքը պետք է վերադարձվի ՀՀ սեփականությանը. հայցն արդեն մուտքագրվել է դատարան, հարուցվել է նաև քրեական գործ:... See more

The property of the Union of Journalists should be returned to RA property. the claim has already been filed in court, a criminal case has also been initiated.

The area is located in the center of Yerevan, around 2400 sq.m. and the market value is about 3-5 million US dollars.

I was informed from the Prosecutor General's Office that the structure processed the letter sent by me and NA President Alen Simonyan months ago.

This is just one of the thousands of properties that, in our opinion have become RA property after



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# Political prisoners in Armenian (non-exhaustive)

## Clergy:

1. Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan
2. Archbishop Mikayel Ajapahyan
3. Bishop Mkrtych Proshyan
4. Father Garegin Arsenyan (house arrest)

## Lay People:

1. Gevork Nersisyan (Brother of Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II)
2. Hambardzum Nersisyan (Nephew of Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II)
3. Lydia Mantashyan
4. Garik Galeyan
5. Vahagn Chakhalyan
6. Mihran Makhsudyan
7. Gagik Sargsyan

8. Tigran Topalyan
9. Garo Okumushyan
10. Tigran Galstyan
11. Arsen Ghazaryan
12. Davit Galstyan
13. Aghvan Arshakyan
14. Igor Sargsyan
15. Ara Rostamyan
16. Armen Aleksanyan
17. Movses Sharbatyan
18. Artur Sargsyan (MP)
19. Andranik Asatryan
20. Aleksan Asatryan
21. Ruben Hakobyan
22. Vazgen Saghetelyan
23. Narek Samsonyan



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# October 19 declaration condemning “gross violations of human rights”

**Protection of Rights Without Borders NGO**

**Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly – Armenian  
Committee**

**Armenian Progressive Youth NGO**

**Public Journalism Club NGO**

**Center for Law and Freedom NGO**

**Regional Center for Democracy and Security**

**Yerevan Press Club**

**Helsinki Association for Human Rights NGO**

**Journalists for Human Rights NGO**

**MITQ NGO**

**Isabella Sargsyan, expert on freedom of  
religion or belief**



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Armenian  
Center for  
Political Rights

# Armenian Center for Political Rights

## INJUSTICE IN ARMENIA

Mass political persecutions of  
2025, **Part I** (May-September)

November 5, 2025

Yerevan



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# The Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity



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# An authoritarian future for Armenia?



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# Armenia without its church?



**CSI's John Eibner with His Holiness Karekin II**

**November 14, 2025**



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